DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 130 784 PS 008 923

AUTHOR Hook, Wade F.
TITLE A Head-Start Type Effort Revisited: Educational and Occupational Achievement Among Participants.
PUB DATE [75]
NOTE 18p.

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Achievement; Attitudes; *Black Community; *Compensatory Education; Demography; Disadvantaged Youth; Intervention; Interviews; Negroes; Occupational Aspiration; Parents; *Preschool Education; Program Effectiveness; *Social Mobility; *Socioeconomic Status
IDENTIFIERS South Carolina

ABSTRACT

This study examined the effectiveness of intervention stategy in reducing poverty among children from low income families in an all-black community. Studied were 68 participants of a 1947 neighborhood project in Columbia, South Carolina. The project included an emphasis on language skills and intellectual growth, involvement of parents and community leaders, referrals for health services, nutrition supplement, social services, and supervised recreation. Follow-up twenty years later showed a substantial shift in the economic status of the subjects. When compared with the economic status of their parents, as well as with local, national, and regional occupational status, income, and unemployment rates of nonwhites, differential achievement on the part of the participants was found. Clear evidence is presented to show intergenerational occupational mobility. Examination of the data and of responses from interviews suggests that the project was contributory to the socioeconomic progress. Findings support the contention that poverty intervention programs have value. (Author/MS)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED130784

10176

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION
THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRO
DUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM
THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGIN
ATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS
STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRE
SENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

A HEAD-START TYPE EFFORT REVISITED: EDUCATIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT AMONG PARTICIPANTS

PS 008923

Wade F. Hook, PhD
Professor of Sociology
Box 128
Gettysburg College
Gettysburg, Pa., 17325

ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this study was to examine the effectiveness of intervention strategy in reducing proverty among children from low income families in an all-black community. Analysis of the available data shows a substantial shift in the economic status of sixty-eight participants in a Head Start-type project twenty years after they shared in the experience. When compared with the economic status of their parents, as well as with local, national, and regional occupational status, income, and unemployment rates of nonwhites, differential achievement on the part of the participants is found. Clear evidence is presented to show intergenerational occupational mobility. Examination of the data and of the responses from the interview schedules suggests that the project was contributory to the socio-economic progress. The findings support the contention that poverty intervention programs have value.

Educational professionals and para-professionals have raised serious questions concerning the effectiveness of short-term community projects and Head-Start programs in disadvantaged neighborhoods. (Datta, 1970:2-20) This article is a report on a study which investigated sixty-eight participants in a neighborhood project in a black community in the South twenty years after they took part in such an experiment. The organized program in which they participated had many of the characteristics of Project Head Start, which was begun under the Economic Opportunity Act of August 20, 1964 and announced on February 19, 1965 as a Community Action Program for preschool children from low income families.

Head Start, now observing its tenth anniversary, has had its detractors and its promoters. Supporters have claimed a vocabulary boost; gains in self-confidence and self-esteem; improvement of health and nutritional standards (Carleton, 1966: 20-22); strengths derived from parental involvement and the family-centered nature of the program (See Head Start Child Development Act, 1970: 18-27); and significant differences in achievement using such measurements as the Caldwell-Soule Pre-School Inventory (Sontag, Sella and Thorndike, 1960: 387). The counter argument asserts ineffectiveness in producing significant gains in cognitive and affective development that persist into the early elementary grades (Williams and Evans, 1969: 126); inadequately trained and inexperienced personnel (Smith and Bisell, 1970: 57); lack of follow-up (See the New Republic, April 12, 1969: 12); too much structure and regimentation (Smith, 1969:11); and the early imposition of middle

class values and life styles which encourage denial of the cultural heritage of blacks. Richard Nixon in his poverty speech on February 19, 1969, inferred ineffectual efforts and weak long-term results of Project Head Start (See New York Times, February 20, 1969: 33). The conclusion of Mary Jo Bane and Christopher Jencks that educational progress and school reform cannot contribute significantly to adult equality argues against the claims of achievement for all compensatory education efforts in social reform. (See Saturday Review of Education, October, 1972: 38)

SETTING

Members of a class in Community Organization at the University of South Carolina recruited sixty-eight black children representing forty-five families out of a total of ninety-one family units and a total population of 405 in a disadvantaged neighborhood of Columbia, South Carolina, and organized a summer program in the summer of 1947. This was the culmination of an effort conducted throughout the 1946-47 academic year to mobilize social services and community resources to improve the lives of these families. The project included an emphasis on language skills and intellectual growth, involvement of parents and community leaders, referrals for health services, nutrition supplement, social services, and supervised recreation.

PROCEDURE

In 1968 the participants, who then ranged in age from 24-38, were interviewed with emphasis on determining socio-economic condition as compared to the levels of their parents. Field

observation and detailed interview schedules were utilized.

Easy rapport was obtained by showing interviewees a series of black and white snapshots in which they identified themselves and others in playground scenes when they were in early or middle childhood. Considerable excitement and reminiscence ordinarily followed this self-identification and discovery of the identity of their friends and classmates. Information on those not living in the Columbia area was obtained from mailed questionnaires or from interviews with a near relative. In practically all cases, the relatives interviewed were parents or siblings. Twenty-seven of the sixty-eight were found to be living in South Carolina, with twenty-five of these located in the Columbia area; nineteen reside in New York; seven live in New Jersey; and the other fifteen are scattered from Pennsylvania to California.

Family relationships and religious memberships and behavior were found to be very similar to those of their families of origin. In educational achievement and employment, there were substantial differences.

COMPARISON WITH PEERS

The absence of complete data employing a control group for purposes of comparison is a recognized limitation of the study. However, the school records of a local control group of sixty-eight children from the same social strata and from the same geographical area were examined. These children were comparable in age, sex, race, academic aptitude, and socio-economic background to those who were involved in the experimental project.

They had also attended the same elementary and high schools. The educational achievement of those in the program was clearly superior to that of the control group. While eleven, or slightly more than 16%, of the children graduated from college; three, or 4.4%, of the random sample of peers did. For fifteen (22%) of the children, graduation from high school was the highest educational level completed, and thirteen (19.1%) of their peers reached this accomplishment. Elementary school (less than eight years) was the highest attainment for fourteen (20.6%) of the children and for twenty-three (33.8%) of the control group. (See Table I.)

Due to high residential mobility rates and other factors restricting the availability of the information, evaluation of the occupational accomplishments and income levels of those in the control group was not possible. The impressionistic evidence suggested that these were considerably below those who had been exposed to the compensatory education program.

INTERGENERATIONAL COMPARISONS--EDUCATION & OCCUPATIONS

Striking contrasts were discovered in the educational training of the parents and their children. Registration information at the time of enrollment lists no parent as having had college experience. Data on the educational achievement of the children are shown in Table I. Eleven, or slightly more than 16 percent, have graduated from college. Another ten (14.7%) had completed technical courses. High school graduation was the highest educational accomplishment for fifteen (22%). Thirty (44%) had not completed high school.

Table I. YEARS OF SCHOOL COMPLETED BY CHILREN, 1967, COMPARED WITH YEARS OF SCHOOL COMPLETED BY PEERS, 1967

Year of School Completed	Children			Peers		
	Men	Women	Total	Men	Women	Total
Total	35	33	68	35	33	68
Elementary: Less than 8 yrs.	10	4	14	16	7	23
High School: 8th gr. through 11th gr.	9	7	16	13	12	25
12th gr. - high school graduate	4	11	15	4	19	13
College or technical courses beyond high school	5	5	10	1	3	4
College graduate	5	6	11	1	2	3
Information not available	2		2			

The findings also show impressive intergenerational occupational mobility. When the children registered for the project in 1947, none of their parents were in high status occupations. Although two fathers were entrepreneurs in small business enterprises, most of their occupations would be rated below average in rankings of occupational prestige (Hodge, Seigel, and Rossi, 1964: 286-302). With few exceptions, the parents were at the bottom of the stratification heap. When enrollment information was obtained, four fathers were deceased; three were ill or unemployed; and thirteen families were headed by women. The occupational distribution of the twenty-five employed fathers is shown in Table II.

Twenty-six mothers were employed at the time of registration; four were deceased; eight were housewives and did not work outside the home; and in seven families the children were living with grandparents or other relatives, and mothers were not mentioned.

Although parents had no professional, technical, or clerical occupations, eighteen (26.4%) of their children had attained these categories. No parents were skilled factory workers in 1947; but ten (14.7%) of their children had entered this type of employment by 1967. Therefore, the evidence indicates that the children have penetrated higher echelons of the occupational scale than their parents. (See Table II.)

REGIONAL AND NATIONAL COMPARISONS - ECONOMIC STATUS

Distributions of employed persons in the South contrasted with the non-South have consistently shown that nonwhites in the South have not kept pace with nonwhites in other regions of the

Table II. OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION SHOWING COMPARISON OF CHILDREN, 1967, WITH PARENTS, 1947.

Occupation Group	Children	Fathers	Mothers
Total	68	32	38
White Collar Occupations	19		
Professional, Technical and Related Workers	10		
Managers, Proprietors, Officials	1	2	
Clerical and Related Workers	8		
Professional Athletes	1		
Skilled Laborers	10		2
Unskilled Laborers & Service Occupations	24	21	24
Laborers (Unskilled)	19	13	[illegible]
Service Workers Except Household	3	8	9
Private Household Workers	2		15
Military Service	3	2	
Housewives	5		8
Unemployed	3	3	
Deceased	1	4	4
Occupations Not Reported	2		

country in white-collar and blue-collar skilled and semi-skilled employment. However, the occupational distribution of this group from a "poverty area" in a Southern City compares favorably with that of nonwhite workers in the nation as a whole. Nationally, in 1967, approximately 23% of nonwhites were white-collar workers (U.S. Bureau of Census, 1968:226), while approximately 28% of those in the project had achieved this employment status. Nationally, in 1967, for the first time, over half of all nonwhite workers had white-collar, craftsman, and semi-skilled jobs (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1968:15). In the group from the project, approximately 54% of those participants living in the South and almost 50% of the total group were employed in these categories.

While 35% of nonwhites in the nation had family incomes below the poverty level in 1967 ($3,335 for non-farm family of 4) (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1968:9), 11.7% of project participants were in this category. In the same year the nonwhite unemployment rate was 7.3% for the country as a whole (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1968:13) and 4.4% for the group studied. The median family income for Negroes in the South was $3,992 in 1967 (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1968:7), while in the same year the median income for project members residing in the South was $4,510. While approximately 38% of black families in the South had incomes below $3,000 in 1967 (u.S. Bureau of the Census, 1969:324), 14.2% of project members residing in the South were so classified. In these regional and national comparisons, the findings consistently reveal above average socio-economic status for the project participants.

LOCAL AND STATE COMPARISONS - ECONOMIC STATUS

The same pattern emerges when the economic achievements of blacks in the local area are used as a reference point. The census data for 1970 show that in 1969 blacks in South Carolina had achieved a median family income of $4,444, but the project members residing in South Carolina had a median family income of $4,510 by 1967. Blacks in the city of Columbia had a median family income of $4,514 in 1969, but the blacks in the project, twenty-five of whom were residing in the city, had almost equalled this amount two years earlier when they reported a median family income of $4,486.

It is beneficial to the local area that seven of the college graduates have remained in Columbia. They hold such positions as teacher, librarian, and book store manager, and they are community leaders and role models. Not only have they escaped poverty, but their achievements make the perpetuation of Negro subordination and traditional Southern racial ideology difficult.

OTHER CHARACTERISTICS

Few of the participants were characterized by genuine apathy, withdrawal from social participation, high levels of personal demoralization, or by deviation from normative patterns of behavior. Only five of the sixty-eight (7.4%) have known police records. Only one person among the sixty-eight has been positively identified as having received a check from the Welfare Department. One additional person is reported to be a recipient. Nationally, fourteen percent of nonwhites were receiving welfare payments in 1967 (U.S. Dept. of Labor, 1968:10). In the city of Columbia,

10.5% of blacks were receiving public assistance allowances in 1969. (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1970:42).

ATTITUDES OF PARTICIPANTS TOWARDS PROJECT IN RETROSPECT

In response to a question soliciting evaluative comments from the interviewees, the replies were generally very positive in nature. Only three persons offered strongly negative remarks or reactions. These individuals tended to stereotype all such projects as paternalistic and patronizing. Speaking from a radical perspective, they were pessimistic about economic advancement for blacks without revolutionary changes in the social structure.

The most frequently mentioned positive responses are shown in Table III.

Over ninety percent of the respondents, not having been beneficiaries of the Brown vs. Board of Education decision in 1954, had only affirmative comments to make concerning their experiences with white teachers. For most of them, this was the only contact with white instructors throughout their years in school.

A City Parks and Recreation Commission worker stated: "We spent some wonderful weeks at _____ School. It was a great idea, but the time was too short. The project inspired me and helped me to become what I am now."[1]

An IBM operator said: "I found out that people can see people and treat people as fellow human beings, and this is the way it should be."[2]

[1-2]The two quotations are from a series of interviews completed by the author in 1968.

Table III. MOST FREQUENT RESPONSES TO THE QUESTION: "DID YOU DERIVE PERSONAL BENEFITS FROM THE PROJECT? IF SO, WHAT WERE THEY?"

Response	Number times mentioned
Learning to know others (whites)	19
Character building	16
Instilled personal pride	13
Made me want to continue to go to school	13
Religious instruction (Bible stories)	10
It gave me something to do in the summer time	10
It opened my mind	9
Happy childhood experiences and/or memories	7
It kept me from leaving home/running away	7
Made me less afraid	3
Workers helped my whole family	2
Getting to orthopedic surgeon at the right time	1
I owe the project everything - my eyesight	1

SUMMARY

Examination of the evidence shows that the project participants had achieved by 1967 considerably higher standing with respect to education and employment than that held by their parents as young adults, as well as higher educational levels than their peers. Their employment status is even more impressive when it is compared with local, regional, and national data on such things as occupational distribution, income, and unemployment. They have different occupational and educational characteristics than those of their parents; they rank favorably in median family earnings when compared with blacks in Columbia and South Carolina populations; and they rank higher in education than their peers. There is no claim that these accomplishments are attributable solely to their exposure to a Head-Start type program. Their socio-economic progress has occurred in a period of national expansion of the economy and of national demands for employment opportunities for blacks. However, there are suggestions from the data available for this analysis and from interview materials that the project was contributory to the psychological and educational readiness of these particular blacks to advance socio-economically. That this had indeed occurred suggests that the plan of the government-sponsored Project Head-Start, now an on-going $392 million operation serving 350,000 children annually and designed to interrupt the cycle in which people slide from poverty into deeper poverty, can achieve significant results.

In relating adult success to compensatory education, the present investigation presents findings in support of early

intervention programs for poor and black children whose families are unable to provide educational stimulation for them. This particular experimental program had considerable impact as a vehicle for a better life for the group studied.

REFERENCES

Bane, Mary Jo and Christopher Jencks.
1972 The Schools and Equal Opportunity. Saturday Review of Education, 55: 37-42.

Carleton, Charles S.
1966 Head Start or False Start: 20-22.

Coleman, James S.
1969 The Concept of Equality of Educational Opportunity in Equal Educational Opportunity. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1-24.

Dalta, Lois-ellin
1969 A Report on Evaluation Studies of Project Head Start. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office.

Fiske, Edward B.
1975 Head Start: After Ten Years, Planning Experiments, New York Times, June 8, 1975.

Granger, R. L.
1969 The Impact of Head Start--An Evaluation of the Effects of Head Start on Children's Cognitive and Affective Development, Vol. 1. Report to the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity by Westinghouse Learning Corporation and Ohio University.

Henderson, Vivian W.
The Economic Status of Negroes: In the Nation and in The South. Toward Regional Realism Series, No. 3, Southern Regional Council.

Hodge, Robert W., Paul M. Seigel, and Peter H. Rossi.
1964 Occupational Prestige in the United States, 1925-1963, American Journal of Sociology 70: 286-302.

McDill, Edward L., Mary S. McDill, and J. Timothy Sprehe.
1969 Strategies for Success in Compensatory Education: An Appraisal of Evaluation Research, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press.

New York Times.
1969 Excerpts from Nixon's Poverty Message, February 20, 1969: 33.

Rees, Helen E.
1968 Deprivation and Compensatory Education: A Consideration, Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Smith, Charles.
1969 Poor Head Start and its 1969 Children, The New Republic, 1960: 11-13.

Smith, Marshall S., and Joan S. Bissell.
1970 Report Analysis: The Impact of Head Start. Harvard Educational Review, 40: 51-129.

Sontag, Marvin, Adina P. Sella, and Robert L. Thorndike.
1969 The Effect of Head Start Training on Cognitive Growth of Disadvantaged Children. Journal of Education Research, 62: 387-389.

The New Republic.
1969 Following Up on Head Start. The New Republic, 160: 12-13.

U. S. Bureau of Census
1970 Census of Population: Detailed Characteristics South Carolina. Washington: PC (1) D-42, Microfiche.

U. S. Bureau of Census.
1968 Statistical Abstract of the U.S. Washington: Government Printing Office.

1969 Statistical Abstract of the U.S. Washington: Government Printing Office.

U. S. Congress.
1970 Senate Committee on Labor and Public Welfare: Subcommittee on Employment, Manpower and Poverty. Head Start Child Development Act., S2060. Washington: Government Printing Office.

U. S. Department of Labor.
1968 Recent Trends in Social and Economic Conditions of Negroes in the United States. Washington: Government Printing Office.

Williams, Walter and John W. Evans.
1969 The Politics of Evaluation: The Case of Head Start. Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science, 385: 118-132.

Wohlford, Paul.
1974 Head Start Parents in Participant Groups. The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 10: 222-249.